



READINGS BOOKLET



CANADA

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GRADE 12 DIPLOMA EXAMINATION

English 30

Part B: Reading (Multiple Choice)

June 1991

Alberta
EDUCATION

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**GRADE 12 DIPLOMA EXAMINATION
ENGLISH 30**

Part B: Reading (Multiple Choice)

READINGS BOOKLET

DESCRIPTION

Part B: Reading (Multiple Choice) contributes 50% of the total English 30 Diploma Examination mark.

There are seven reading selections in the Readings Booklet and 70 questions in the Questions Booklet.

Total time: 2 hours

INSTRUCTIONS

- Be sure that you have an English 30 Readings Booklet and an English 30 Questions Booklet.
- You may NOT use a dictionary, thesaurus, or other reference materials.

I. Questions 1 to 10 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

CALLED FOR

Tonight we drive back late from talk and supper
Across miles of unlit roads, flat field and fen,
Towards home; but on the way must make a detour
And rescue you from what, half-laughingly,

5 We think of as your temporary world —
Some group or other, all outlandishly
Named and rigged up in fancy dress and loud
With adolescent grief. Well, we're too old
For alien caperings like that. The road

10 Runs towards home and habit, milk and bed.

That unborn child I locked up in neat stanzas
Survives in two or three anthologies,
An effigy sealed off from chance or changes,
Now I arrive near midnight, but too early

15 To claim you seventeen years afterwards:
A darkened auditorium, lit fitfully
By dizzy crimsons, pulsing and fading blues
Through which electric howls and snarled-out words
Isolate you (though only in my eyes)

20 Sitting among three hundred sprawling bodies.

Your pale face for a second looms up through
The jerking filters, splatterings of colour
As if spawned by the music, red and blue
Over and over — there, your face again,

25 Not seeing me, not seeing anything,
Distinct and separate, suddenly plain
Among so many others, strangers. Smoke
Lifts as from a winter field, obscuring
All but your face, consuming, as I look,

30 That child I gave protective rhetoric.

Not just this place, the tribal lights, the passive
Communion of noise and being young,
Not just the strident music which I give
No more than half an ear to; but the sense

35 Of drifting out into another plane
Beyond the one I move on, and moved once
To bring you into being — that is why
I falter as I call you by your name,
Claim you, as drifting up towards me now

40 You smile at me, ready for us to go.

*Anthony Thwaite,
Modern English poet*

II. Questions 11 to 22 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from the short story *Two Sides to a Tortoise*.

from TWO SIDES TO A TORTOISE

It was customary in the mid nineteenth century for whaling ships to stop at the Encantadas (Enchanted Isles), now known as the Galapagos Islands, to deposit mail at Charles Island and to take aboard a supply of tortoises. The author remembers his first experience with Charles Island.

Some months before my first stepping ashore, my ship was cruising in its close vicinity. One noon, we found ourselves off the South Head of Albemarle, and not very far from the land. Partly by way of freak, and partly by way of spying out so strange a country, a boat's crew was sent ashore, with orders to

5 see all they could, and besides, bring back whatever tortoises they could conveniently transport.

It was after sunset when the adventurers returned. I looked down over the ship's high side as if looking down over the curb of a well, and dimly saw the damp boat deep in the sea with some unwonted weight. Ropes were dropped over,

10 and presently three huge antediluvian-looking tortoises, after much straining, were landed on deck. They seemed hardly of the seed of earth. We had been abroad upon the waters for five long months, a period amply sufficient to make all things of the land wear a fabulous hue to the dreamy mind. Had three Spanish custom-house officers boarded us then, it is not unlikely that I should have curiously

15 stared at them, felt of them, and stroked them much as savages observe civilized guests. But instead of three custom-house officers, behold these really wondrous tortoises — none of your schoolboy mud turtles — but black as widower's weeds, heavy as chests of plate, with vast shells medallioned and orbed like shields, and dented and blistered like shields that have breasted a battle, shaggy, too, here and

20 there, with dark green moss, and slimy with the spray of the sea. These mystic creatures, suddenly translated by night from unutterable solitudes to our peopled deck, affected me in a manner not easy to unfold. They seemed newly crawled forth from beneath the foundations of the world. With a lantern I inspected them more closely. Such worshipful venerableness of aspect! Such fury greenness mantling

25 the rude peelings and healing the fissures of their shattered shells. I no more saw three tortoises. They expanded — became transfigured. I seemed to see three Roman Coliseums in magnificent decay.

Ye oldest inhabitants of this or any other isle, said I, pray, give me the freedom of your three-walled towns.

30 The great feeling inspired by these creatures was that of age: — dateless, indefinite endurance. And, in fact, that any other creature can live and breathe as long as the tortoise of the Encantadas, I will not readily believe. Not to hint of their known capacity of sustaining life, while going without food for an entire year, consider that impregnable armor of their living mail. What other bodily being

35 possesses such a citadel wherein to resist the assaults of Time?

As, lantern in hand, I scraped among the moss and beheld the ancient scars of bruises received in many a sullen fall among the marly mountains of the isle — scars strangely widened, swollen, half obliterate, and yet distorted like those

Continued

40 sometimes found in the bark of very hoary trees, I seemed an antiquary of a geologist, studying the bird-tracks and ciphers upon the exhumed slates trod by incredible creatures whose very ghosts are now defunct.

45 As I lay in my hammock that night, overhead I heard the slow weary draggings of the three ponderous strangers along the encumbered deck. Their stupidity or their resolution was so great that they never went aside for any impediment. One ceased his movements altogether just before the mid-watch. At sunrise I found him butted like a battering-ram against the immovable foot of the foremast, and still striving, tooth and nail, to force the impossible passage. That these tortoises are the victims of a penal, or malignant, or perhaps a downright diabolical enchanter, seems in nothing more likely than in that strange infatuation of hopeless toil which 50 so often possesses them. I have known them in their journeyings to ram themselves heroically against rocks, and long abide there, nudging, wriggling, wedging, in order to displace them, and so hold on their inflexible path. Their crowning curse is their drudging impulse to straightforwardness in a belittled world.

55 Meeting with no such hindrance as their companion did, the other tortoises merely fell foul of small stumbling-blocks — buckets, blocks, and coils of rigging — and at times in the act of crawling over them would slip with an astounding rattle to the deck. Listening to these draggings and concussions, I thought me of the haunt from which they came; an isle full of metallic ravines and gulches, sunk bottomlessly into the hearts of splintered mountains, and covered for many miles 60 with inextricable thickets. I then pictured these three straightforward monsters, century after century, writhing through the shades, grim as blacksmiths; crawling so slowly and ponderously, that not only did toadstools and all fungous things grow beneath their feet, but a sooty moss sprouted upon their backs. With them I lost myself in volcanic mazes; brushed away endless boughs of rotting thickets; 65 till finally in a dream I found myself sitting cross-legged upon the foremost, a Brahmin¹ similarly mounted upon either side, forming a tripod of foreheads which upheld the universal cope.²

70 Such was the wild nightmare begot by my first impression of the Encantadas tortoise. But next evening, strange to say, I sat down with my shipmates and made a merry repast from tortoise steaks and tortoise stews; and supper over, out knife, and helped convert the three mighty concave shells into three fanciful soup tureens,³ and polished the three flat yellowish calipees⁴ into three gorgeous salvers.⁵

Herman Melville,
19th century American novelist

¹Brahmin — in Hinduism, representative of the divine reality of the universe

²cope — cloak or mantle

³tureens — large bowls

⁴calipee — the lower shell of a tortoise

⁵salvers — trays

III. Questions 23 to 31 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from the play *Henry the Fifth*.

from HENRY THE FIFTH, Act IV, Scene i

CHARACTERS:

KING HENRY V — King of England
JOHN BATES
MICHAEL WILLIAMS } soldiers in the King's army

The army of KING HENRY V is camped at Agincourt, France, preparing to fight against the French army. KING HENRY is standing off alone among the tents, awaiting daybreak. He has disguised himself in a cloak borrowed from one of his officers.

WILLIAMS: Who goes there?

KING HENRY: A friend.

WILLIAMS: Under what captain serve you?

KING HENRY: Under Sir [Thomas] Erpingham.

5 5 WILLIAMS: A good old commander and a most kind gentleman. I pray you, what thinks he of our estate?

KING HENRY: Even as men wreck'd upon a sand, that look to be wash'd off the next tide.

BATES: He hath not told his thought to the King?

10 10 KING HENRY: No; nor it is not meet he should. For, though I speak it to you, I think the King is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it does to me; the element shows to him as it doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet, when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing. Therefore, when he sees reason of fears as we do, his fears, out of doubt, be of the same relish as ours are; yet, in reason, no man should possess him with any appearance of fear, lest he, by showing it, should dishearten his army.

15 20 BATES: He may show what outward courage he will; but I believe, as cold a night as 'tis, he could wish himself in Thames up to the neck; and so I would he were, and I by him, at all adventures, so we were quit here.

KING HENRY: By my troth, I will speak my conscience of the King: I think he would not wish himself anywhere but where he is.

25 BATES: Then I would he were here alone; so should he be sure to be ransomed, and a many poor men's lives saved.

KING HENRY: I dare say you love him not so ill to wish him here alone, howsoever you speak this to feel other men's minds. Methinks I could not die anywhere so contented as in the King's company, his cause being just and his quarrel honourable.

30 30 WILLIAMS: That's more than we know.

Continued

BATES: Ay, or more than we should seek after; for we know enough if we know we are the King's subjects. If his cause be wrong, our obedience to the King wipes the crime of it out of us.

35 **WILLIAMS:** But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and arms and heads, chopp'd off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry all, "We died at such a place"; some swearing, some crying for a surgeon, some upon their wives left poor behind them, some upon the debts they owe, some upon their children rawly¹ left. I am afear'd there are few die well that die in a battle; for how can they charitably dispose of anything, when blood is their argument? Now, if these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the King that led them to it; who to disobey were against all proportion of subjection.

40 **KING HENRY:** So, if a son that is by his father sent about merchandise do sinfully miscarry upon the sea, the imputation of his wickedness, by your rule, should be imposed upon his father that sent him; or if a servant, under his master's command transporting a sum of money, be assailed by robbers and die in many irreconcil'd iniquities, you may call the business of the master the author of the servant's damnation. But this is not so. The King is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant; for they purpose not their death when they purpose their services. Besides, there is no king, be his cause never so spotless, if it come to the arbitrement of swords, can try it out with all unspotted soldiers. Some peradventure have on them the guilt of premeditated and contrived murder; some, of beguiling virgins with the broken seals of perjury; some, making the wars their bulwark, that have before gored the gentle bosom of Peace with pillage and robbery. Now, if these men have defeated the law and outrun native punishment, though they can outstrip men, they have no wings to fly from God. War is His beadle,² war is His vengeance; so that here men are punish'd for before-breach of the King's laws in now the King's quarrel. Where they feared the death, they have borne life away; and where they would be safe, they perish. Then if they die unprovided, no more is the King guilty of their damnation than he was before guilty of those impieties for the which they are now visited. Every subject's duty is the King's; but every subject's soul is his own. Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed, wash every mote out of his conscience; and dying so, death is to him advantage; or not dying, the time was blessedly lost wherein such preparation was gained; and in him that escapes, it were not sin to think that, making God so free an offer, He let him outlive that day to see His greatness and to teach others how they should prepare.

70 **WILLIAMS:** 'Tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill upon his own head, the King is not to answer it.

BATES: I do not desire he should answer for me; and yet I determine to fight lustily for him.

William Shakespeare

¹rawly — unprovided for

²beadle — chastiser, punisher

IV. Questions 32 to 42 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from the modern play *Here We Are*.

from **HERE WE ARE**

A compartment in a Pullman car.¹ HE is storing the suitcases in the rack and hanging up coats. SHE is primping. HE finishes disposing of the luggage and sits down.

HE: Well!

SHE: Well!

HE: Well, here we are.

SHE: Here we are, aren't we?

5 HE: Well! Well! How does it feel to be an old married lady?

SHE: Oh, it's too soon to ask me that. At least — I mean, Well, I mean, goodness, we've only been married about three hours, haven't we?

HE: We have been married exactly two hours and twenty-six minutes.

SHE: My, it seems like longer.

10 HE: No, it isn't hardly half-past six yet.

SHE: I didn't have any idea what time it was. Everything was so mixed up, I sort of don't know where I am, or what it's all about. Getting back from the church, and then all those people, and then changing all my clothes, and then everybody throwing things, and all. Goodness, I don't see how people 15 do it every day.

HE: Do what?

SHE: Get married. When you think of all the people, all over the world, getting married just as if it was nothing.

HE: Well, let's not worry about people all over the world.

20 HE: I know, but I just sort of got to thinking of them, all of them, all over everywhere. I mean — getting married, you know. And it's — well, it's sort of such a big thing to do, it makes you feel queer. And how does anybody know what's going to happen next?

HE: Let them worry, we don't have to. We know darn well what's going to 25 happen next. I mean — well, we know it's going to be great. Well, we know we're going to be happy. Don't we?

SHE: Oh, of course. Only you think of all the people, and you have to sort of keep thinking. It makes you feel funny. An awful lot of people that get married, it doesn't turn out so well. And I guess they all must have thought 30 it was going to be great.

HE: Aw, come on, now, this is no way to start a honeymoon, with all this thinking going on. Look at us — the wedding all done and all.

SHE: Ah, it was nice, wasn't it? Did you really like my veil?

HE: You looked great, just great.

35 HE: Oh, I'm terribly glad. Ellie and Louise looked lovely, didn't they? I'm terribly glad they did finally decide on pink. They looked perfectly lovely.

HE: Listen, I want to tell you something. When I was standing up there in that old church waiting for you to come up, and I saw those two bridesmaids,

Continued

¹Pullman car — railway car with private compartments that can be made up for sleeping

40 I thought to myself, "Well, I never knew Louise could look like that!" I thought she'd have knocked anybody's eye out.

SHE: Oh, really? Funny. Of course, everybody thought her dress and hat were lovely, but a lot of people seemed to think she looked sort of tired. People have been saying that a lot, lately. I tell them I think it's awfully mean of them to go around saying that about her. I tell them they've got to remember that Louise isn't so terribly young any more, and they've got to expect her to look like that. Louise can say she's twenty-three all she wants to, but she's a good deal nearer twenty-seven.

45 HE: Well, she was certainly a knockout at the wedding. Boy!

50 SHE: I'm terribly glad you thought so. I'm glad someone did. How did you think Ellie looked?

HE: Why, I honestly didn't get a look at her.

SHE: Oh, really? Well, I certainly think that's too bad. I don't suppose I ought to say it about my own sister, but I never saw anybody look as beautiful as Ellie looked today. And you didn't even notice her. But you never pay attention to Ellie, anyway. Don't think I haven't noticed it. It makes me feel just awful that you don't like my own sister.

55 HE: I do so like her! I'm crazy for Ellie. I think she's a great kid.

60 SHE: Don't think it makes any difference to Ellie! Ellie's got enough people crazy about her. It isn't anything to her whether you like her or not. Don't flatter yourself she cares! Only, the only thing is, it makes it awfully hard for me you don't like her. I keep thinking, when we come back and get in the apartment, it's going to be awfully hard for me that you won't want all my family around. I know how you feel about my family. Don't think I haven't seen it. Only if you don't ever want to see them, that's your loss. Not theirs. 65 Don't flatter yourself!

HE: Oh, now, come on! What's all this talk about not wanting your family around? Why, you know how I feel about your family. I think your old lady — I think your mother's swell. And Ellie. And your father. What's all this talk?

70 SHE: Well, I've seen it. Don't think I haven't. Lots of people they get married, and they think it's going to be great and everything, and then it all goes to pieces because people don't like people's families, or something like that.

HE: Honey, what is all this? What are you getting all angry about? What are you trying to start a fight for? Ah, I guess you're just feeling sort of nervous.

75 SHE: Me? What have I got to be nervous about? I mean, goodness, I'm not nervous.

80 HE: You know, lots of times, they say that girls get kind of nervous and yippy — I mean, well, it's like you said, things are all so sort of mixed up and everything, right now. But afterwards, it'll be all right. I mean. I mean — well, look, honey, you don't look any too comfortable. Don't you want to take your hat off? And let's don't ever fight, ever. Will we?

85 SHE: Ah, I'm sorry I was cross. I guess I did feel a little bit funny. All mixed up, and then being sort of 'way off here, all alone with you. It's so sort of different. You can't blame a person for thinking, can you? Yes, don't let's ever, ever fight. We won't be like a whole lot of them. We won't fight or be nasty or anything. Will we?

HE: You bet your life we won't.

Continued

SHE: I guess I will take this darned old hat off. It kind of presses. Just put it up on the rack, will you, dear? Do you like it, sweetheart?

90 HE: Looks good on you.

SHE: No, but I mean, do you really like it?

HE: Well, I'll tell you, I know this is the new style and everything like that, and it's probably great. I don't know anything about things like that. Only I like the kind of hat like that blue hat you had. Gee, I like that hat.

95 SHE: Oh, really? Well, that's nice. That's lovely. The first thing you say to me, as soon as you get me off on a train away from my family and everything, is that you don't like my hat. The first thing you say to your wife is you think she has terrible taste in hats. That's nice, isn't it?

HE: Now, honey, I never said anything like that. I only said —

SHE: What you don't seem to realize is this hat cost twenty-two dollars.

100 HE: I don't give a darn what it cost. I only said — I said I liked the blue hat. I don't know anything about hats.

SHE: It's too bad you didn't marry somebody that would get the kind of hats you'd like. Hats that cost three ninety-five. Why didn't you marry Louise? You always think she looks so beautiful.

105 HE: Ah, now, honey, for heaven's sakes!

SHE: Why didn't you marry her? All you've done, ever since we got on this train, is talk about her.

HE: Listen, baby, while you're talking about things like that, why didn't you marry Joe Brooks? I suppose he could have given you all the twenty-two-dollar hats you wanted!

110 SHE: Well, I'm not so sure I'm not sorry I didn't. Joe Brooks wouldn't have waited until he got me all off alone and then sneered at my taste in clothes. Joe Brooks wouldn't ever hurt my feelings. Joe Brooks has always been fond of me. He's going to give me anything I want for the apartment.

115 HE: Listen, I don't want anything he gives you in our apartment. Anything he gives you, I'll throw right out the window. That's what I think of your friend Joe Brooks.

SHE: You've got a lot of right to talk about Joe Brooks. You and your friend Louise. All you ever talk about is Louise.

120 HE: Oh, for heaven's sakes! What do I care about Louise? I just thought she was a friend of yours, that's all. That's why I ever noticed her.

SHE: Well, you certainly took an awful lot of notice of her today. On our wedding day! You said yourself when you were standing there in the church you just kept thinking of her. Right up at the altar.

125 HE: Listen, honey, I never should have said that. How does anybody know what kind of crazy things come into their heads when they're standing there waiting to get married? I was just telling you that because it was so kind of crazy. I thought it would make you laugh.

SHE: I know, I've been all sort of mixed up today, too. I told you that. Everything so strange and everything. I know you get all mixed up. Only I did think, when you kept talking about how beautiful Louise looked, you did it with malice and forethought.

130 HE: I never did anything with malice and forethought! I just told you that about Louise because I thought it would make you laugh.

135 SHE: Well, it didn't.

Continued

140 **HE:** No, I know it didn't. It certainly did not. Ah, baby, and we ought to be laughing, too. Honey lamb, this is our honeymoon. What's the matter?

SHE: I don't know. We used to squabble a lot when we were going together and then engaged and everything, but I thought everything would be so different as soon as you were married. And now I feel so sort of strange and everything. I feel so sort of alone.

HE: Well, you see, sweetheart, we're not really married yet. I mean. I mean — well, things will be different afterwards. I mean, we haven't been married very long.

145 **SHE:** No.

HE: And we won't ever fight any more, will we?

SHE: Oh, no. Not ever! I don't know what made me do like that. It all got so sort of funny, sort of like a nightmare, the way I got thinking of all those people getting married all the time; and so many of them, everything spoils 150 on account of fighting and everything. I got all mixed up thinking about them. Oh, I don't want to be like them. But we won't be, will we?

HE: Sure we won't.

SHE: It'll all be different, now we're married. It'll all be lovely. Reach me down my hat, will you, sweetheart? It's time I was putting it on. Thanks. Ah, I'm sorry you don't like it.

155 **HE:** I do so like it!

SHE: You said you didn't. You said you thought it was perfectly terrible.

HE: I never said any such thing. You're crazy.

SHE: All right, I may be crazy. Thank you very much. But that's what you said. 160 Not that it matters — it's just a little thing. But it makes you feel pretty funny to think you've gone and married somebody that says you have perfectly terrible taste in hats. And then goes and says you're crazy, besides.

HE: Now, listen here, nobody said any such thing. Why, I love that hat. The more I look at it the better I like it. I think it's great.

165 **SHE:** That isn't what you said before.

HE: Honey, stop it, will you? What do you want to start all this for? I love the damned hat. I mean, I love your hat. I love anything you wear. What more do you want me to say?

SHE: Well, I don't want you to say it like that.

170 **HE:** I said I think it's great. That's all I said.

SHE: Do you really? Do you honestly? Ah, I'm so glad. I'd hate you not to like my hat. It would be — I don't know, it would be sort of such a bad start.

HE: Well, I'm crazy for it. Now we've got that settled, for heaven's sakes. Ah, baby. Baby lamb. We're not going to have any bad starts. Look at us — 175 we're on our honeymoon. Pretty soon we'll be regular old married people. I mean. I mean, in a few minutes we'll be getting in to New York, and then we'll be going to the hotel, and then everything will be all right. I mean — well, look at us! Here we are married! Here we are!

SHE: Yes, here we are, aren't we?

Dorothy Parker,
Modern American writer best known
for her satire and humor

V. Questions 43 to 50 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

LAW LIKE LOVE

Law, say the gardeners, is the sun,
Law is the one
All gardeners obey
Tomorrow, yesterday, today.

5 Law is the wisdom of the old
The impotent grandfathers feebly scold;
The grandchildren put out a treble tongue,
Law is the senses of the young.

10 Law, says the priest with a priestly look,
Expounding to an unpriestly people,
Law is the words in my priestly book,
Law is my pulpit and my steeple.

15 Law, says the judge as he looks down his nose,
Speaking clearly and most severely,
Law is as I've told you before,
Law is as you know I suppose,
Law is but let me explain it once more,
Law is The Law.

20 Yet law-abiding scholars write;
Law is neither wrong nor right,
Law is only crimes
Punished by places and by times,
Law is the clothes men wear
Anytime, anywhere,
25 Law is Goodmorning and Goodnight.

Others say, Law is our Fate;
Others say, Law is our State;
Others say, others say
Law is no more
30 Law has gone away.

And always the loud angry crowd
Very angry and very loud
Law is We,
And always the soft idiot softly Me.

Continued

35 If we, dear, know we know no more
Than they about the Law,
If I no more than you
Know what we should and should not do
Except that all agree

40 Gladly or miserably
That the Law is
And that all know this,
If therefore thinking it absurd
To identify Law with some other word,

45 Unlike so many men
I cannot say Law is again,
No more than they can we suppress
The universal wish to guess
Or slip out of our own position

50 Into an unconcerned condition.
Although I can at least confine
Your vanity and mine
To stating timidly
A timid similarity,

55 We shall boast anyway:
Like love I say.

Like love we don't know where or why,
Like love we can't compel or fly,
Like love we often weep,
60 Like love we seldom keep.

W.H. Auden,
Modern American poet,
critic and playwright

VI. Questions 51 to 61 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from the novel *Songs My Mother Taught Me*.

from SONGS MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME

Two things happened to me the summer I was seventeen: My grandfather Harry sold his summer place and I went to work on the Hill. The second came about ultimately from the first, for it was because there was no more Journey's End that I had to spend my summer in the city for the first time in my (remembered) 5 life. I couldn't believe it.

“Everything?”

“He's sold it all. Some retired couple from Amsterdam. You can bet your Aunt Hettie put him up to it.”

For me, it was like a cruel and unnecessary amputation, done in the night 10 so that I woke up minus a vital limb, helpless, pain-wracked, unable to believe in the empty sleeve, the sewn-up trouser leg.

“Why?”

“He says he can't afford it any more. He needs the money. Or that's what he says.” My mother gave a little snort. (And never offered it to us because he 15 knew we had none.)

Like a legendary drowning man, I began to relive it all again. Looking back, I saw what seemed to be an endless succession of golden summers.

Netting minnows in the shallows.

20 The way we could rub the whitish bloom off blueberries and polish them with our fingertips.

The taste of wintergreen and wild strawberries.

25 The dusty-smelling buffalo rug in front of the huge stone fireplace, from the top of which Harry had fallen, like an outraged angel, just as he placed the last lot of mortar around the very edge of the chimney. Down past the openmouthed hired man who stood on a ladder putting a lighted cigar into a wasps' nest under the eaves. (And survived, unhurt.)

The head of a deer shot by a silver bullet.

The rowing boat named *Jezobel* after me and Jane.

“But I thought it would come to us!”

30 Mother, tight-lipped, her last dream dying hard.

“So did I, Isobel. So did I.”

I cursed the fates that made Harry grow old and cautious, made my father a bad provider, made me seventeen and helpless. Through the dull brown fabric of our lives had run the golden thread of summer. I was terrified. Stifled. How 35 could I live with these people, in this house?

“It's no good crying, Isobel. What's done is done.”

I refused to go and see Harry, who had betrayed me. Refused to make plans.

40 Aunt Olive gave me a string of cultured pearls for graduation, but no one invited me to the senior prom. Under my name in the yearbook, there are no activities listed. Just Isobel Marie Cleary and a touched-up photograph.

“Pretty girls are a dime a dozen,” said Mother. “It's character that counts.”

I went down to the New York State employment agency, where I was offered a job demonstrating hairbrushes in the department stores.

Continued

I tried the *Press* and the *Sun*.

45 "We don't need any new reporters, but we could use an office girl. How fast can you type?"

Most of the kids I knew at Central High had summer jobs which they had been holding down since they were fifteen or so, if they were working at all. A lot were away at their summer cottages. I decided, at last, that I would begin my 50 novel and be famous by the middle of my freshman year. I lay on my bed staring aimlessly at the same piece of yellow paper, listening to the radio and trying not to listen to my parents quarreling with each other about my lack of ambition, my unpopularity, my "unhealthy" attitude toward *Journey's End*. After four days I 55 gave up what was essentially a pretense anyway ("Are you going to let anybody see what you've written, honey?") and just lay about in my bathing suit in the backyard, reading.

My father, like Mr. MacGregor,¹ hoed his tiny vegetable patch and weeded around his roses, talking to himself.

My mother stayed inside, mostly, cooking the elaborate meals he demanded, 60 even in the summertime. Sometimes she would come out on the back porch and we would shuck peas together, but there was tension, not peace, between us. It was not simply because I didn't have a job . . . but that I had not turned out the way I should. The laughing golden-haired baby of her snapshots had turned into a proud, sullen, ungrateful, solitary creature. There had been no talk of a summer 65 job this year until my grandfather sold the cabin. If I had been running off to State Park or Anasco Lake with a group of teenagers she would have warned me about drinking and losing my reputation and worried until I was safely home again, but she would not have been so desperately ashamed (and therefore angry) at my continued presence in the house. It began to dawn on her that I would never be 70 the golden girl she had dreamed of but simply Isobel, her daughter, another of life's misfits. I was a fact. I was there, *all the time*, apparently friendless, ambitionless — at least in so far as the summer was concerned — adopting arrogant postures and rarely deigning to "lift so much as a finger" to help her with the housework.

75 So there was my father, in an old straw hat to protect him against the sun, muttering among the vegetables and flowers. And there was my mother, her hair coming away from its pins, her eyes angry and baffled behind the thick bifocals she was forced to wear, weeping over the ironing and the apple pies or lying across her bed in the heat of the afternoon, reading her endless ladies' magazines.

80 I lay on my stomach under the apple tree, wishing something, anything, would happen to relieve the utter boredom of my life. An earthquake or a lover: It really was irrelevant *what* so long as it was something. To make things worse we were experiencing a heat wave.

I longed for my grandfather's woods, the cool mountain nights, the belching 85 frogs, the liquid embrace of the lake.

("Is it hot enough for you?")

"Have you ever *seen* such a summer?")

In the second week of the heat wave my mother refused to cook anymore and my father brought me home cartons of macaroni and potato salads and beige 90 packages of cold cuts from the delicatessen. I found that even the sound of their chewing was enough to drive me into cramps of rage. I stuck my nails into my

Continued

¹Mr. MacGregor — a gardener in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

palms until they bled. It seemed incredible to me that I wouldn't murder one or both of them before the summer was out.

95 I went back downtown to the employment office to see if the hairbrush job was still available. Maybe, I thought, Rapunzel-like, that some prince would just happen into the department store and be struck by the vision of me brushing out my long, long hair.

It wasn't.

100 "It's too bad you can't type, dear. We could certainly place a typist."

"Look, isn't there anything, *anything* I could do?"

She looked up at me where I stood, desperate, in front of her desk. A tired-looking woman of advancing middle age whose upper arms had run to fat. She frowned and studied me carefully, then took a card from her index file.

105 "D'you think your parents would let you work at the state hospital?"

"You mean the *mental* hospital?"

"Yes. They're asking for a female aide."

My first impulse was to turn and walk straight out of there. In many ways my upbringing had been as sheltered as that of a girl in a convent.

"I don't think . . ." I began.

110 ("Life!" said a sudden sharp voice in my ear. "Life, Isobel!" And then, in a softer tone, "Money.')

"I'll take it."

"You'll have to see the director tomorrow morning" and gave me directions for the bus and warned me about comfortable shoes.

115 I walked back toward the Front Street bridge in a daze. It seemed to me — perhaps I hoped — that my parents would never allow it.

I had just committed the first truly independent act of my life and I was scared. I looked at the shop fronts and the houses as though I were seeing them for the last time. Freedom had never seemed so sweet, summer so inviting. There was still time to change my mind. I stood in the middle of the bridge, leaning on the parapet and gazing down into the muddy river. What did I expect to see reflected there? My face? A sign? There was only a metallic shimmer, painful to look at, where the sun spread itself on the water. I walked on while overhead, as if to mock me, a crayon-yellow airplane completed a capital "I," like God beginning my name in the summer sky.

120 I still hadn't told them by nighttime. Did I want them to say yes or no? They could stop me if they wanted to. I was still, legally, their possession, an extension of themselves.

125 They sat on the porch, each locked in the silence of their own unhappiness; the sexless old dog lay on her side between them. I offered to go for some gingerales and fled down the sweating street. I walked and walked, up one familiar street and down another, the paper bag under my arm. Right now, at the cabin, I thought, I would be lying in my private little circle of warmth listening to the chipmunks on the roof, the pine trees rubbing against the window.

130 "This time last year . . ." It was a game I'd played since I was very small. However chaotic the personal relationships within our family there had been a preciseness to my days and to my turnings. Now I was about to break that pattern, and the heavy, restless night, the unknown baby's cry, seemed ominous and foreboding.

135 "Listen," I said to my parents, who were still sitting on the porch. "I've taken a job. I'm going to work on the Hill."

Then I went inside to find us some glasses and an opener.

Audrey Thomas,
Modern Canadian fiction writer

VII. Questions 62 to 70 in your Questions Booklet are based on this speech.

SPEECH FOR A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

Your official commencement speaker tackles the big themes, tells you to abjure greed, to play fair, to serve your community, to know thyself. Your more personally devoted commencement speaker agrees with all that.

5 But he has special wishes for you too — idiosyncratic, of course, what an educated daughter may have come to expect from an oddball. People always said that you resemble him.

10 What he wishes you first is a love of travel. Travel will hold you back from doting on your troubles, and once you've seen something of the world, you will recognize foreign places as instances of human range. The logic of Athens, the fortitude of London, the grace of Paris — a city for every facet of the mind. He would have you connect travel with an appreciation of the past as well. In Jerusalem recently, he walked the Old City, brushing thousands of years of faith and murder. He would like you to see yourself as history, to wonder what you would have shouted, or at whom, as Jesus struggled up the Via Dolorosa. He hopes that you 15 will husband your own past too. The past means possibility.

15 He also wishes you a love of animals, which you feel strongly already; he hopes that tenderness lasts and grows. Animals, too, draw people out of excessive self-interest, their existence a statement of need. A dog's eyes search your face for a mystery as deep as God, asking nothing and everything, the way that music 20 operates. He hopes that you always love music, even the noisy boredom you clamp to your ears these days, while he harbors the prayer that in later years will follow Vivaldi¹ and Bix Beiderbecke.² If you learn to love jazz, you will have a perpetual source of joy at the ready. Jazz is *serious* joy, much like yourself.

25 For some reason, he has always favored culs-de-sac,³ so he hopes you live on one, someday, a neat little cutoff that surprises the city's motions with a pause. Trees on the street; he would like that for you, and low modest houses so the sky is evident. He hopes that your mornings are absolutely still except for birds, but that the evenings bulge with human outcry, families calling to one another in the darkening hours. He wishes you small particulars: a letter received indicating 30 sudden affection, an exchange of wit with a total stranger, a moment of helpless hilarity, a flash of clarity, the anticipation of reading a detective thriller on a late afternoon in an electric storm.

35 He hopes that you learn to love work for its own sake. You have to be lucky for that (of course, he wishes you luck), and find a job that grows out of dreams. Something to do with helping others in your case, he should think, since he has seen your natural sympathy at work ever since your smallest childhood and has watched you reach toward your friends with straightforward kindness. Friends, he knows, you will have in abundance. He wishes them *you*.

40 He hopes that you will always play sports, just as ruthlessly as you play sports now. He hopes that you will always seek the company of books, including the trashy romances: that you will always be curious about the news, as long as

Continued

¹Vivaldi — composer of classical music in the early 18th century

²Bix Beiderbecke — famous jazz cornet player

³culs-de-sac — streets that are closed at one end

you do not mistake the news for life. Believe it or not, he even hopes that you will always be crazy about clothes, particularly once you establish your own source of income — fashion plate, charge plate. You seem to know the difference between vanity and style. On you high style looks good, kid.

45 Eccentrics: he hopes that you always have plenty of them about you, and few, if any, sound thinkers. Sound thinkers appear on television; sycophants award them prizes for sound thinking. Eccentrics have a sound of their own, like the wild Englishman Lord Berners, who invited a horse to tea, or less extravagantly, 50 Bill Russell, who played basketball to meet only his own standards of excellence. Russell told *his* daughter that he never heard the boos of the crowd because he never heard the cheers — no easy feat in an age pumped up by windbags and *Kirkus Reviews*. Your commencement speaker hopes that you will turn a deaf ear to empty praise as much as to careless blame, that you will scare yourself with 55 your own severity.

Solitude he wishes you as well, but not solitude without a frame. Choose creative times and places to be by yourself. In museums, for instance, where you may confront Vermeer or Velázquez eye to eye. On summer Sundays, too, when you may be alone with the city in its most clear and wistful light: the mirrored 60 buildings angled like kitchen knives, the Hopper stores dead quiet, the city's poor dazed like laundry hung out to dry on their fire escapes. For contrast, seek real country roads, tire-track roads straddling islands of weeds and rolling out into white haze. Such roads are not easy to find these days, but they exist, waiting to trace your solitude back into your memories, your dreams.

65 65 You never back down from a fight. Your commencement speaker cheers you for that, and hopes you do not weaken or think safe. Still, it helps to learn that some fights are too small for kindling, and if you must fight out of your weight class, always fight up. Hatred without a fight is self-consuming, and fighting without hatred is purposeless, so regretfully he wishes you some hatred too. But 70 not much, and not to hold too long. There is always more cheapness in the world than you suspect, but less than you believe at the time it touches you. Just don't let the trash build up. And there is much to praise.

75 Such as your country, which, odd to admit, he hopes that you will always cherish, that you will acknowledge the immeasurable good in the place as well as the stupidities and wrongs. If public indignation over the scandals in Washington proves anything, it is that Americans remain innocent enough to believe in government by laws, and to be angered by deceit in power. He hopes that you retain and nurture that innocence, which is your country's saving grace.

80 80 In general, he wishes that you see the world generously, that you take note of and rail against all the Lebanons of violence, the Africas of want, but that you also rear back and bless the whole. This is not as hard to do as it may seem. Concentrate on details, and embrace what you fear. The trick is to love the world as it is, the way a father loves a daughter, helpless and attached as he watches her stretch, bloom, rise past his tutelage to her independent, miraculous ascendancy. 85 But you must never let go entirely, as he will never let you go. You gave birth to each other, and you commence together. Goodbye, my girl.

Roger Rosenblatt,
American essayist

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